

Smart Planning for Farm Fence Construction in County Cavan

Getting the Basics Right Before You Start

I have spent years working on farms across County Cavan, and one thing I have learned is that fence building looks simple until you are halfway through a bad job. A good fence keeps livestock in, predators out, and saves you money over time. But the difference between a fence that lasts ten years and one that needs repairs every season comes down to the choices you make before you dig the first post hole.

Soil type, drainage, and the kind of animals you are containing all shape the design. A drystone wall might suit a hillside with plenty of local stone, but on the heavy clay ground you find around Belturbet, a properly strained wire fence with treated timber posts will hold up much better. That is where experience matters. You can read all the guides you like, but until you have sunk a post into wet ground and watched it rot in three years, you do not really understand why some treatments work and others do not.

Choosing Materials That Work for Your Land

The first decision is what to build with. Timber posts treated with copper-based preservatives will last twenty years or more in most Irish soils. Creosote-treated posts were the old standard, but they are harder to find now and come with environmental restrictions. For most farmers I talk to, pressure-treated softwood is the practical choice. It costs less than oak or larch and performs well if you set it correctly.

For the straining posts at corners and gateways, you need something thicker. A 125mm to 150mm diameter post, set at least 900mm deep, will take the tension without pulling over. I have seen too many gates sag because someone skimped on the corner posts. It is one of those places where spending a little extra saves a lot of frustration later.

[View the location on Google Maps](#)

Wire choice depends on what you are fencing. Sheep need a close mesh or a combination of plain and barbed wires. Cattle will lean on anything, so a good high-tensile wire with a spring handle in the strainer unit is worth the investment. If you are keeping horses, you need a top rail or a visible tape, because they can panic and run through plain wire. Getting the details right for your stock is part of the skill in [farm fence construction](#).

Planning the Layout on the Ground

Before you start digging, walk the line of the fence with a spade and mark any hidden drains or pipes. Cutting through a land drain with a post hole is a classic mistake that leads to flooding and a lot of extra work. I once watched a neighbour spend a whole day rerouting a drain he had broken with a digger. It is the kind of job you only do once.

Think about access for maintenance too. A fence that runs along a ditch might keep stock in, but if you cannot get a mower or a flail along it, you will be fighting with briars every summer. Leaving a metre of clear ground on the inside of the fence makes life much easier. It also helps you spot weak posts before they fail.

If you are fencing a boundary with a neighbour, get the line agreed before you start. Disputes over fences are common and they sour relationships. A few minutes with a map and a walk of the line can save years of awkward conversations at the mart.

Setting Posts Properly

Post depth is critical. For a standard stock fence, a post should go at least 600mm into the ground. On soft ground, go deeper. The hole should be just wide enough to take the post and allow you to pack the earth back tight. I prefer to use a crowbar to tamp the soil in layers, not just shovel it in and hope. Loose backfill lets the post wobble, and a wobbling post will pull the wire slack in no time.

If you are setting posts in concrete, only do it for the straining posts. Concrete around every post might seem like a good idea, but it traps moisture against the timber and speeds up rot at ground level. Also, if a post breaks, you have to dig out a lump of concrete instead of just knocking in a replacement. For the intermediate posts, well-tamped soil is better.

I always treat the cut tops of posts with a bit of preservative or a metal cap. Rain sitting on the end grain is a fast route to rot. It is a small detail that adds years to the life of the fence.

Straining the Wire

This is the part that separates a tidy fence from a mess. You need a good strainer, proper gripples or wire ties, and the patience to take the tension slowly. High-tensile wire should be tensioned until it sings, but not so tight that it snaps on a cold morning. Plain wire stretches more than you think, so leave a little slack for the first season, then come back and tension it again.



For barbed wire, keep the barbs facing the same way along the run. It looks neater and makes it easier to fix breaks later. And always wear good gloves when handling barbed wire. I have the scars to prove why.

When you are joining two lengths of wire, use a proper knot or a crimp. A twisted join will pull apart under tension. There is a right way to do every join, and taking the extra minute to do it properly is what makes the difference between a fence that stays tight and one that sags after the first gale.

Gates and Gateways

A gate is the most used part of any fence, so it deserves the best materials. Set the gate posts deeper than the rest, at least 900mm, and concrete them in. Use a good hinge and a strong latch. A gate that drags on the ground because the post has moved will drive you mad every time you open it. I have replaced many gates that were fine except for the post that had shifted.

Make the gateway wide enough for your biggest machinery. A tractor and trailer need at least 3.6 metres. If you ever plan to bring in a combine or a silage wagon, go wider. It costs almost nothing extra to set the posts a bit further apart, and it saves a lot of reversing later.

Maintenance That Pays

Even the best built fence needs attention. Walk the lines after a storm and after the winter. Look for broken wires, loose staples, and posts that have lifted in the frost. Tighten the wires before they go slack enough for an animal to get a leg through. A little work in the spring saves a lot of chasing in the summer.

If you have a hedgerow along the fence, keep it trimmed so the weight of the growth does not pull the wire down. Hedges are great for shelter, but they can ruin a fence if you let them get out of hand. That is where a professional hedge trimming service can help, especially on larger farms where there is always something else to do.

Every farmer I know has a story about the fence that failed at the worst moment. The bull that got into the heifers, the sheep that wandered onto the road, the call from the neighbour at eleven o'clock at night. Good farm fence construction is not just about keeping animals where they belong. It is about peace of mind. When you know the fence is solid, you can sleep better through a stormy night.

If you are planning a new fence or repairing an old one, take the time to do it right. The materials cost the same whether you rush or take care. It is the labour and the attention to detail that make the difference. And if you need a hand with the ground preparation or the hedging alongside the fence, Aldridge Landscaping Services Cavan, based at Drumgart, Belturbet, Co. Cavan, H14 D278, Ireland, can be reached at +353 85 135 3227 for hedge trimming, tree surgery, fencing, and other land maintenance work in the area.